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Which Candidate Selection Method Is More Democratic?

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Scholars of political institutions debate the level by which different institutions help or impair the realization of various democratic principles.¹ There are stormy debates, for example, over which electoral systems and government systems better serve the principles of democracy.² But in the case of candidate selection methods there is no such discourse, probably due to the relative underdevelopment of this field of research (Hazan and Rahat, 2006a). Nevertheless, candidate selection methods are important for democracy in the same sense that electoral systems are. Both institutions are links in the chain of the electoral connection that stands at the center of modern representative democracy (Narud et al., 2002). In order to be elected to parliament, one should first (in almost all cases) be selected as a candidate of a specific party. Candidate selection is the “process by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective office will be designated on the ballot and in election communications as its recommended and supported candidate or list of candidates” (Ranney, 1981: 75). Candidate selection takes place almost entirely within particular parties. There are very few countries where the legal system specifies criteria for candidate selection and even fewer in which the legal system suggests more than central guidelines (Muller and Sieberer, 2006: 441; Rahat, 2007).

The aim of this article is quite ambitious – to open the debate on the question, “Which candidate selection method is more democratic?” It does this by suggesting guidelines for identifying the ramifications of central elements of candidate selection methods for various democratic dimensions – participation, competition, representation and responsiveness – and by analyzing their possible role in supplying checks and balances.

It is common to see participation as the major aspect through which democracy in candidate selection method should be evaluated. For example, the replacement of selection by selected party agencies with selection by party members (party primaries) is defined as democratization (Rahat and Hazan, 2001). The article suggests a much broader perspective for the evaluation of the adherence of candidate selection methods to democratic standards: it relates to additional aspects in the candidate selection methods beyond the inclusiveness of the electorate; it then looks at possible consequences of candidate selection methods beyond participation – representation, competition and responsiveness; and it examines the role of candidate selection method as a part of the (liberal) democratic system of checks and balances.

The article starts with a presentation of the general perceptions of democracy that serve to gauge the adherence of each candidate selection method to democratic principles. The next four sections suggest assessments of the democratic ramifications of four major elements that distinguish candidate selection methods.³ First, the inclusiveness of the electorate -- the body that selects the party’s candidates. Much more attention is given to the nature of the electorate than to the other three elements because it is considered to be the most important one in terms of its influence on the democratic qualities of the system. Second, the inclusiveness of candidacy – what conditions does the party set for considering an aspirant as a candidate? Third, the level of centralization/decentralization of selection – does selection take place mainly at the national level or is it largely decentralized along territorial or functional lines? Fourth, the system used for

the selection of candidates – are voting systems necessarily democratically superior to appointment systems? And which of the different possible voting methods is more democratic? The article ends with the same conclusion that many ancient philosophers arrived at when they addressed the question of the structure of the “good” regime: that a candidate selection method that integrates several elements will better serve democracy than one that adheres to one particular value or to a single specific arranging principle.

A point of caution is warranted before turning to answer the question that stands as the theme of this paper. The normative claims posited here are based on available empirical evidence. For some of the issues that are dealt with, research supplies a strong empirical basis; other issues are contested, as pointed out in the discussion below (a prominent debate is on the relationship between inclusiveness and decentralization and party cohesion). For yet other issues, there is little, if any, empirical evidence. This paper tries to compensate for the lack of evidence by either using evidence from similar research (e.g. electoral systems research for understanding the influence of voting methods) or drawing on sound theoretical claims.

There may be some who argue that it would be preferable to wait with the normative discussion until such time in the future when we (hopefully) have a more solid empirical base. But there are at least two good reasons to open the normative debate at this stage. First, because this might serve as an incentive, in itself, for empirical studies, especially of the needed cross-national kind. Second, this is a real question about the real world and we should thus try to suggest a cautious, yet reasonable answer to it in order to serve the goal of promoting democracy.

What Is a “More Democratic” Candidate Selection Method?

This study suggests using two general perceptions of democracy for evaluating the level at which each aspect of the candidate selection method adheres to democratic principles. These represent two current, commonly shared perceptions of (liberal) democracy.

The first is a positive perception of democracy, i.e., democracy as a system that allows all citizens to participate in choosing among competing candidates and groups that claim to better represent their interests and values. After being elected, government officials are expected to remain responsive to the demands and grievances of their voters.

From this perspective, a *more* democratic system is one that optimally balances between four basic democratic elements: participation, competition, representation and responsiveness. Participation and competition are part of even the most minimal definition of democracy (Schumpeter, 1943).⁴ Representation, meanwhile, is a central element in modern democracy, which is representative democracy. One expects that the representative will be similar to the represented: either sociologically (women will represent women, for example) or in terms of their opinions and interests (feminists will represent women, for example). These two kinds of representation, also known as representation of ideas and representation as presence, are interconnected (Phillips, 1995). It is argued that representation as presence enhances representation of ideas because it ensures that the representatives share the life experience and interests of those whom they represent (Katz, 1997: 104).⁵ The theory of representative democracy also expects that the elected representatives will be responsive to the demands and grievances of their respective (s)electorates.

From this viewpoint, the more democratic candidate selection would be the one that contributes to the fulfillment of these four dimensions of democracy: a high rate of meaningful political participation; representation of relevant societal forces and various opinions; real competition on safe seats or safe positions on the parties' candidate list; and a viable electoral connection that would pressure the elected to be responsive to the needs and grievances of the public.

However, these four dimensions interact with each other, and their relationships are not always linear and positive (Rahat and Hazan, 2005). For example, wide participation in candidate selection is likely to impair the ability of the party to assure proper representation of various social groups. That is, there is a negative relationship between the levels of participation and representation (see discussion below). Thus, what we are looking for is a system that optimally (rather than ideally) balances participation, competition, representation and responsiveness; not a system that entirely fulfills all of these goals at the same time.

The second perception offered here can be identified as a more classic liberal (or in the current discourse, neo-liberal) notion of democracy. It perceives democracy as essentially a restrained regime of checks and balances, one in which power is intentionally diffused among several actors (Riker, 1984). This "negative" notion of democracy presumes that power corrupts, no matter whether it is in the hands of the people or an oligarchy, and thus emphasizes the restraint of power rather than its proper "democratic" use. From this point of view, the more the power of selecting candidates is diffused among several distinct political actors, the more democratic the system.

Which Selectorate(s)?

The selectorate is the body that selects the candidates. It may be composed of one person or several or many people – indeed, as many as the entire electorate of a given nation. The selectorate of each single party can be classified according to the extent of its inclusiveness. For the sake of simplicity, three kinds of selectorates that are relevant in most cases will serve here as archetypes: (1) Party members, who directly select candidates in party primaries, represent the most inclusive method. The purest type of party primaries is where the voting of party members alone decides the composition and rank of the candidate list or the candidacy in each Single Member District (SMD). (2) Candidate selection by a selected agency of the party, composed of delegates who were selected by party members, represents a medium level of inclusiveness. (3) The highly exclusive kind of selectorate is the nomination committee, a small group that is usually composed of a few leaders or their aficionados.

In order to substantiate the claims regarding the "positive perception" of democracy, we should first explore– on the basis of existing literature on the political consequences of candidate selection -- which selectorate better serves which democratic goal. While it is clear that the goal of wide participation is served by using the most inclusive selectorate, we should probe whether other democratic goals – competition, representation and responsiveness -- are also better served by such an open selectorate. If they are not, we should determine which selectorate (or possibly a combination of selectorates) would help realize these goals.

The relationships among the three kinds of selectorates and participation, representation, competition and responsiveness are presented in Table 1. Several scholars identified a negative

relationship between inclusiveness in participation and representativeness, especially, but not solely, in regard to women's representation (Hazan and Rahat, 2002ab; 2006b; Narud, Pedersen and Valen, 2002; Obler, 1970; Rahat and Hazan, 2005; Ware, 1996). Findings about the negative relationship between decentralization and representativeness (Caul-Kittlson, 2006; Matland and Studlar, 1996) and liberal democracy and women's representation (Kunovich and Paxton, 2005) also substantiate the logic of the claim that smaller and more coordinated selectorates can better ensure representativeness than large uncoordinated selectorates.

Table 1: The relationships between participation, representativeness, competition and responsiveness in three kinds of selectorates

Selectorate	Inclusiveness in Participation	Representativeness	Competition	Responsiveness
Nominating committee	Low	High	Low	Partisan
Selected party agency	Median	Median	High	Mainly partisan
Party members	High	Low	Median	Partisan and nonpartisan

As for the relationship between the inclusiveness in participation and competition, the meager comparative analysis available points to the relationship that appears in Table 1 – a relatively high level of competition when selection is conducted by selected party agencies; an intermediate level when primaries are conducted; and a low level when selection is made by a highly exclusive selectorate (Obler, 1970, Hazan and Rahat, 2002ab; 2006b; Rahat and Hazan, 2005). Evidence for the low level of competition in American (highly inclusive) primaries (Jackson, 1994; Key, 1964: 434-454; Maisel and Stone, 2001) and Matland and Studler's (2004) research on legislative turnover seem to substantiate the claim that in cases of selection through voting (and not of nominations by small committees) the incumbents' advantage increases parallel to the increase in the size of the selectorate.

The claims about the kind of relationship between the inclusiveness in participation and kinds of responsiveness are based on the notion that the more inclusive candidate selection methods are, the higher both the involvement and the influence of non-party actors – interest groups, donors, campaign professionals and the mass media (Hazan and Rahat, 2002ab; Rahat and Hazan, 2006; Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007).⁶

Obviously, these claims may be disputed (see, for example, Cross, 2006), and they surely deserve additional systematic empirical re-examination against more extensive data, especially of the cross-national comparative kind. Nevertheless, they do represent a wide spectrum of available empirical findings from various studies, and they should thus be seen as satisfactory for serving as our guidelines in the following discussion. Moreover, even if we do not accept all the claims that appear in Table 1, the very idea that there is a tradeoff -- that certain selectorates can serve some goals better at the same time that other selectorates more efficiently promote other goals -- is sufficient for accepting the logic of the recommended method that suggests combining several selectorates in the candidate selection process. We can thus turn to look for the optimal

selectorate (or rather combination of selectorates) in terms of the four basic democratic elements: participation, representation, competition and responsiveness.

First, by definition, more inclusive selectorates allow for wider participation. Experience teaches us, however, that the price of quantity is often quality. Opening up the party to wide participation in candidate selection may result in low-quality participation: turnout is relatively disappointing; most members are “instant” members – having joined for the sake of party primaries but ready to bunk the party as soon as the primaries are over; many members are not even supporters of the party they joined but rather did so to select a specific candidate; many of those registered are not even aware that they became members of the parties.⁷ Facing these abuses, it would seem reasonable to impose some obstacles on membership participation in order to increase its quality. Conditioning participation in candidate selection on a meaningful minimal term of membership would be an important step towards fulfilling this aim. This would require parties to relinquish the show of power that is related to the success of recruiting large number of new members before elections. But this short-term payment would better serve the longer-run organizational health of the parties and the quality of intra-partisan participation. Parties, as voluntary associations, have not only the right (which the state lacks) but also the organizational imperative to sustain themselves as such. In order to encourage higher, more sincere, levels of activism beyond the candidate selection event itself, they must have the ability to allocate selective incentives. When the privileges of long-time loyal activists are equaled to those of new, temporary and unfaithful registrants, the differential structure of rewards in parties becomes damaged.

Second, as claimed in Table 1, in a highly inclusive selectorate, it would be difficult to ensure representation of the various groups and ideas that the party might be interested to represent. In contrast, a small nomination committee can craft a highly representative team of candidates. A selected party agency is somewhere in between, as it can coordinate moves to ensure minimal representation of certain groups, but lacks full control over candidacies. This seems to imply that parties should take care to adopt mechanisms for ensuring representation of certain social groups when they open their selectorates, especially when adopting primaries. This is indeed an evident trend: many parties have simultaneously adopted more inclusive selectorates while at the same time imposing some limits on them – using quotas to ensure minimal representation of women, for example (Norris, 2006).

It should be taken into consideration, however, that unwise use of a representation correction mechanism can hurt those that are supposed to be assisted. For example, adopting a low static quota for women's representation may in the short run create a point of entry for women into politics; but in the long run it would become the “private” estate of a few women incumbents, and not of women per se. It is also likely to encourage a separate competition among women -- rather than their integration into the general competition -- because each would (rationally) call on voters to select her and not other women in the case that too few seats or positions are reserved for women. Such mechanisms would turn from being tools for affirmative action into mechanisms that make under-representation a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, wise application of representation correction mechanisms requires limiting their use to newcomers (or, at least, single-term incumbents). It is also recommended to use high quotas or progressively increasing quotas in order to avoid the undesired creation of a separate realm of women's competition. In those systems with a high level of incumbents' re-election (i.e., low legislative turnover) the use of progressively increasing quotas would help to facilitate a process of gradual replacement of male incumbents with women newcomers.

Third, as suggested in Table 1, it is expected that medium-sized selectorates (such as selected party agencies) will be the most competitive, followed by the more inclusive selectorates (party members) and finally the least inclusive selectorates (nomination committees). If a polity gets its fair amount of turnover as a result of general elections, this element might be of lesser significance for its democratic functioning, although the lack of competition within established parties may still be seen as a problem for the parties themselves. But if elections do not bring turnover, if parties are retaining similar seat shares, or even just holding on to their seats in specific constituencies for a long time, then competition within parties becomes valuable for democracy. Here, involving a selected party agency in the selection process is likely to be a remedy. Ensuring satisfactory turnover does not necessarily imply that party agencies should be the sole selectors or that they should have the last word in selection. Rather, in order to serve the purpose of turnover, a party agency (or agencies) should be given the role of approving and rejecting incumbents' candidacies.

Finally, it is expected that legislators who are selected by an inclusive selectorate of party members will be exposed to various pressures (including non-partisan ones), which could be quite different from the party program, and will have to be responsive to them (Table 1). Giving those activists who populate selected party agencies the exclusive power to choose the party's candidates also comes at a price. They may use their power for promoting their self-interests and/or may pressure the party in parliament to adhere to orthodox ideology in a way that would harm its electoral or governmental performance. Ensuring that representatives remain exclusively responsive to party leaders, through selecting them by a nomination committee, may result in a cohesive team, but could also mean that we end up with a bunch of yes-men and yes-women who fail to represent the range of values and interests which the party claims to represent.

It is thus plausible to argue that in order to avoid underscoring the pathologies that may result from the exclusive use of each kind of selectorate, several selectorates should be used in a way that would optimally balance between personal responsiveness, on the one hand, and party cohesion, on the other. This may enable us to achieve what Shugart called "electoral efficiency" – the translation of the will of a majority of voters into policies (Shugart, 2001). This conclusion also fits the suggested "negative" perception of democracy as it implies the diffusion of power among several actors. This point will be further elaborated below.

The uneasy relationships (nonlinear and negative) between the four dimensions – participation, representation, competition and responsiveness -- lead to the conclusion that no specific kind of selectorate is necessarily more democratic. The evaluation of the role of each selectorate in realizing democracy depends on our expectations: do we want parties to supply an additional wide participatory arena or carefully crafted representative candidacies? High competition or wide participation?

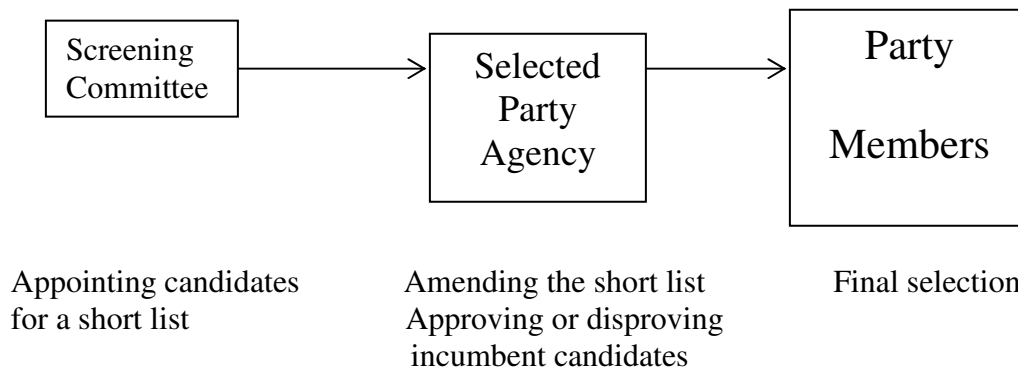
If we see the relationship between democracy within states and democracy within parties as complementary (Cross and Young, 2005) then parties, instead of investing further in participation – which is the imperative of the democratic state -- may enhance other democratic dimensions. In order to serve democracy, parties may need to structure participation so it will still allow for the creation of a relatively balanced list, the creation of higher levels of competition in order to offset incumbency, or for balancing responsiveness.

In short, because political parties – like other important enclaves in modern democracies (courts are the most prominent examples) – are not subject to the universal participatory prerequisite, they may be used to fine-tune other aspects of the democratic polity. As long as

parties act in the framework of a democratic state that abides by the participatory prerequisite, they can contribute to enhancing democracy on other, not insignificant dimensions, which require compensation due to the price extracted at the state level by the prerequisite for universal participation.

The questions, “which is the most democratic selectorate” in particular and “which is the most democratic candidate selection method” in general should thus not be met with an either/or answer. Rather -- as already claimed in the discussion of the issue of responsiveness -- a certain integration of several selectorates in the selection process, as proposed in Figure 1, may produce an optimal balance in the fulfillment of the four different democratic goals.

Figure 1: A Proposal for an Optimal Candidate Selection Method: A Tri-stage Process



There are many possible ways to integrate several different selectorates in candidate selection processes. Figure 1 suggests a tri-stage process that starts with an exclusive selectorate that filters candidates and produces a short list; it then continues with selection by a party agency whose role is to approve or reject incumbent candidacies and that may also amend the proposed short list of candidates; and it ends with selection by those party members who were affiliated with the party for a minimal term. In terms of participation, this combination allows for meaningful participation for the wider selectorate of party members – they are the ones to conduct the final selection, to decide which candidates are positioned in safe positions/seats and which are not. At the same time, it is sensitive to the need for providing activists with selective incentives, and granting them special screening authorities.

It would be hard to ensure representativeness in such a process because it ends with the voting of a large unorganized selectorate of party members that lacks the ability to coordinate the selection of women and minorities. But a reasonable level of representation can still be achieved. First, the nominating committee should take care to produce a short list with more than token representatives, with enough women and minority candidates from whom party members can choose. Second, employing representation correction mechanisms, such as quotas, would ensure a minimal level of representation for such groups.

The level of competition is likely to be modest among party members. The trial for incumbents at the mid-stage, that is, the need for approval of their candidacy by the selected party agency, is likely to allow for some competition of aspirants over safe seats or positions. Furthermore, the screening of candidates in the first stages may assure that the limited group of aspirants that stays in the contest will put up a fight against the usually victorious incumbents.

That is, the lower the number of aspirants, the less diffused are those votes that are intended to either protest against incumbents or to simply refresh party representation.

The proposed tri-stage process may be an especially optimal solution for the problems of responsiveness. That is, in order to ensure her reselection, the selected member of parliament will have to respond to the party leadership, the party agency and to party membership, and this might create an optimal web of pressures between the personal and the partisan, between the party program and other non-partisan interests. In other words, the possible pathologies that can develop when the representative responds to a single kind of selectorate are not likely to develop in a multi-stage setting.

Combining several selectorates in the process means a diffusion of power that fits the basic principle of the “negative” perception of democracy. Selection is not in the hands of a single group of actors but requires the wide consent of various possible veto players that hold significantly different views on the characteristics and behavior of their ideal candidate(s).

Candidacy – Inclusive or Exclusive?

Who is eligible to stand as the candidate of a particular party? A party may allow extremely inclusive candidacy, granting every voter that opportunity. But it may also set highly exclusive terms for candidacy, such as long-time party membership (five years, for example), affiliation with certain organizations, adherence to a given religious sect, etc. More common requirements are less demanding and include a minimal length of membership prior to the presentation of candidacy and pledges of loyalty to the party. Details on candidacy requirements can be found in research literature, yet no systematic study of the issue has been conducted. Therefore, we would have to base the discussion in this section on sound theoretical considerations.

Democracy means that every citizen is equally eligible to run for office. But this does not imply that each party must allow any citizen who wishes to do so to compete for this role. First, it is the state that should take care of the right to be elected, not a specific party. Second, if everyone were eligible to compete for candidacy in all parties, the parties would lose their ability to represent competing interests, values and policy programs. However, it should be acknowledged that (incumbent) parties are almost the sole platforms for the implementation of the basic democratic right of being elected. It therefore should not be impossible for citizens to become eligible candidates in parties that represent their values and interests. In other words, it could be argued that candidacy should be moderately conditioned in such a way that a citizen with serious political aspirations would be able to take on the challenge.

Moderate candidacy rules would also serve other purposes. They would not permit the party to become an empty vessel, a mere platform for promoting personal aspirations, but would still allow for candidacies that are beyond the standard middle-class-white-male type. Moderate limitations may also help to reduce the number of competitors in a way that would allow aspirants to effectively challenge incumbents. Such limitations can also be constructive in terms of responsiveness, as they are likely to produce candidates that share interests and values and can thus be expected to work in a cohesive way; at the same time it still allows, within certain boundaries, the existence of a variety of candidates with somewhat different perceptions of interests and values.

How does candidacy relate to the negative notion of democracy? It seems that there is not much of a direct linkage here. Yet, if moderate candidacy rules were to help increase competition, and at the same time still allow for a variety of meaningful representative candidacies (as argued above), then this would serve -- or, at the least, would not impair -- the negative notion of democracy in the sense of encouraging -- or allowing -- a diffusion of power within the party. In other words, real competition within the party and a variety of candidacies may allow for the creation of an intra-party arena in which there are several non-formal and sub-formal centers of power.

Centralization vs. Decentralization

Candidate selection methods may be seen as decentralized in two senses. Decentralization can be territorial, i.e., when local party selectorates appoint or select party candidates — such as a local leader, a local party agency, all party members or voters in an electoral district. Decentralization of the selection method can also be functional, i.e., ensuring representation for delegates of such groups as trade unions, women, minorities, etc.

Territorial decentralization, while enabling regional and local representation, may impair attempts at securing other, non-territorial kinds of representation. If every region selects a single local representative (either for candidacy in a single member district or for a regional list), it is hard to ensure the candidacies of women and minorities; if a team is selected, it is easier to take into account several considerations at the same time. Indeed, research demonstrates that the decentralization of candidate selection has had a negative impact on women representation (Caul-Kittlson, 2006; Matland and Studlar, 1996). As for participation and competition, it is hard to see a direct link to decentralization, although it might be argued that a decentralized system enhances the quality of participation because it brings selection closer to the relevant selectorate. As for responsiveness, once again the interest should be in balancing it, this time, between the different levels, between the national and the local (and possibly, if relevant, also the regional). Decentralization may sometimes enhance the power of local selectorates to the point that it might impair the ability of the party to work cohesively in promoting national party programs and policies.⁸ If decentralization indeed leads to too much pork-barrel politics, the national center should be allotted some influence, to balance the strength of local interests

Territorial decentralization means the dispersion of power among many sub-units of the party, and from the standpoint of the “negative” perception of democracy it is surely more democratic. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that it is possible that a decentralized system would be highly oligarchic (Gallagher, 1980). For example, if a small nominating committee were to be the sole selector of the candidates in each single member constituency, with no say for the party central office, the method would be highly decentralized and highly exclusive at the same time.

Mechanisms such as quotas help to fulfill the democratic goal of functional representation.⁹ At the same time, it can be claimed that they limit competition when they distinguish certain kinds of candidates (women, minorities) from the general crowd of candidates. However, such mechanisms can be democratically justified as long as they are perceived as temporary, intended to assure that all contesters stand on the same starting line rather than giving any one an advantage. These mechanisms may be implemented in all kinds of selectorates, so they cannot be claimed to either limit or enhance participation. Responsiveness

can be influenced by the use of certain representation correction mechanisms. If quotas are in use, then the selected candidate owes his/her selection to the same electorate as his/her fellow members of parliament. But if certain candidates are selected only by their kind – women candidates by women selectors, Flemish candidates by Flemish selectors, etc. -- then they are expected to be more attentive to the demands of their specific groups. When dealing with issues that are relevant to his/her specific group of selectors, the representative may prefer the interests and views of that group to those of his/her party. Such deviant behavior may serve the cause of representation as long as it does not appear frequently and impair the parties' everyday ability to aggregate interests and work cohesively for the promotion of a compromised policy program.

From the perspective of power dispersion, decentralization for the sake of territorial representation is not unlike decentralization for the sake of functional representation. There may be differences, however, because of the different ways that these kinds of representation are usually assured. Mechanisms that assure territorial representation are usually more decentralized because they usually mean that a electorate in a specific district selects that district's representatives. In contrast, the mechanisms usually used for assuring the representation of women (as an example of the most common groups whose representation is assured through representation correction mechanisms), the quota, is less decentralized. That is, while candidacy is decentralized when using quotas, the electorate is not, as it is composed of both men and women.¹⁰

Voting Systems or Appointment Systems? Which Voting System?

A voting procedure is one in which votes determine whether a specific person is to be named the party's candidate in the general elections or in which they decide his or her position on the list. An appointed body of two people or more can use such a voting procedure; yet, it is not considered a voting system unless two conditions are filled: first, each candidate's votes must be the sole determinant of each candidacy. For example, the case in which an agreed-upon list or an allocation is ratified en bloc by a unanimous or majority vote cannot be considered a "voting system"; second, the voting results must be presented officially to justify and legitimize the candidacy. When these conditions are not fulfilled, then we deal with an appointment system. The literature almost ignores this issue. There is no systematic study of it beyond the typology of voting and nomination systems suggested by Rahat and Hazan (2001: 306-309). Thus, the discussion here would be helped by the findings of the highly developed field of electoral studies.

In itself, voting is surely perceived as a more democratic procedure. Only a voting procedure allows meaningful participation of more than a few people; only voting allows for real competition among contesters for the selectors' votes. At the same time, by its very nature, voting does not allow parties to assure balanced representation. The use of representation correction mechanisms can help to ensure minimal representation to a certain extent but, as already argued, their use is not without a price for those same groups they aim to empower.

From the perspective of the diffusion of power, voting is surely preferred because it is about dispersing the selection power among the individual selectors. The result of a voting contest is determined by aggregating individual decisions. An appointment itself means that power is concentrated in the hands of a small coordinated group. However, nomination committees are usually not closed oligarchies; rather, they are frequently composed of

representatives of the major rivaling groups within parties and thus allow for compromises rather than for a majoritarian takeover. So it seems that democracy would be optimally served, once again, by the well-crafted use of both systems: the appointment for creating a representative short list; and voting for amending it, re-adopting or deselecting incumbents and for the final selection by party members.

The selection of candidates can be made by various voting systems. These can be distinguished according to their levels of proportionality, from proportional representation (for example, Single Transferable Vote) to semi-proportional systems (such as limited vote) to various majoritarian methods (alternative vote, plurality vote, exhaustive ballot).¹¹ The decision as to which of these voting methods is more democratic may be helped along with the claims of both sides in the old debate between supporters of proportional representation electoral systems and of majoritarian electoral systems (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989: 47-57). PR is taken to be more representative while majoritarian systems are claimed to lead to better governance, which in terms of parties may be parallel to cohesion. Indeed, more proportional voting systems seem to be more democratic in their treatment of representation, as they give the minority in the party a chance to be represented in parliament. Concerning responsiveness, majoritarianism seems to be a better recipe for party cohesion, inasmuch as every representative is judged by the majority of the party electorate. PR, on the other hand, allows members to represent a minority within the party and may thus lead him or her to be responsive to a specific group rather than the party as a whole. Finally, proportional representation voting systems may better serve the goal of checking power through its diffusion (Riker, 1984).

Conclusions

Using two criteria – the “positive” (that was further cut into four distinguished elements: participation, representation, competition and responsiveness) and the “negative” perceptions of democracy—led to the suggestion to employ a three-stage candidate selection method. In the first stage, a small committee appoints candidates to a short list; in the second stage, a selected party agency may add or remove candidates using a special procedure (absolute majority vote, for example) and it would also ratify the re-adoption of incumbent candidates; finally, party members would select candidates for safe seats or safe list positions among the proposed candidates. This multi-stage process integrates three kinds of selectorates that make use of appointment and voting systems. The article also recommended using moderate requirements for candidacy; the use of a non-majoritarian voting method; and allowing the national center a real say in candidate selection.

The method suggested can (and should) still be tailored to the specific culture and tradition of the specific party in a given state. The proposed model allows much flexibility regarding all of its elements: the exact characteristics of the selectorates (to name just a few – how would the composition of the nomination committee be determined? Which party agency would take part in the process? What are the specific requirements for becoming a party member?); the weight of the role of the center vs. the regional and local organizations; the exact requirements for candidacy; and the specific voting system that would be in use. The principle that should be adhered to in all cases is that of involving several selectorates in the process of candidate selection. The more democratic selection method would be a multi-stage method.

Cross and Young (2005) suggest several contextual factors that relate to the characteristics of the electoral system, the party system, legislative behavior, the leadership selection method and society -- that should be considered when designing a candidate selection method. According to their claim, certain characteristics make a party's internal democracy more important for democracy in general in a given political system, while others reduce its importance. For example, if voters are given a full choice of candidates on the general election day – thanks to the use of an open list system – then party democracy is of less importance than in the case when they have no real choice – i.e., a closed list system or single member plurality systems.

Indeed, the exact design of the candidate selection method adopted by a given party in a specific state must be sensitive to contextual factors. Yet, the claim here is that the three-stage method outlined generally above would contribute to democracy in all cases, thanks to its internal logic. Moreover, this can be the case also if we adopt Cross and Young's (2005) logic, that is, their emphasis on exclusiveness in participation. For example, returning to the issue of the nature of the electoral system, a country with a closed list system would surely benefit, in terms of participation, from allowing meaningful membership participation – as the three--stage method allows. However, in a country with an open list system, the benefit would be even larger: party voters would select members of parliament from the team suggested by the party selectorates -- the leaders, the delegates and the final decision-makers, the party members; power would be dispersed among four, rather than three, selection bodies – three selectorates and one electorate.

Parties should be treated as voluntary associations, and as such should be free to decide which candidate selection method to use.¹² Nevertheless, because candidate selection is indeed part of the chain of delegation, it is important to be able to judge whether parties use more or less democratic methods and whether they supply the system with additional democratic qualities, or rather create problems. This article provides tools to assess the level by which the candidate selection methods that are in use help to realize democratic principles. It also outlines the main characteristics of the optimal democratic candidate selection method. In any case, an assessment of the quality of democracy must take into account not only easily accessible and highly visible elements, such as electoral systems and government systems, but also the more obscure and less visible aspects of candidate selection methods.

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Notes

¹ A version of this paper was submitted to “Government and Opposition.”

² For the debate about electoral systems, see, for example: Duverger, 1984; Hermens, 1984; Lakeman, 1984. And

also: Lijphart, 1991; Lardeyret, 1991; Quade, 1991. For the debate about government systems, see, for example:

Horowitz, 1990; Lipset, 1990; Linz, 1990.

³ On the four dimensions that distinguish candidate selection methods, see: Rahat and Hazan, 2001. For other classifications, see: Ranney, 1981; Gallagher, 1988ab.

⁴ See also the review of the definitions of democracy in Vanhanen, 1990: 7-11.

⁵ A study of the Swedish parliament indeed demonstrates that women are the prime representatives of women's interests, and thus presence guarantees that interests and ideas will be truly represented (Wangnerud, 2000).

⁶ There is disagreement concerning the influence of the exclusiveness of the selectorate on legislative behavior. There are scholars who argue, on the basis of the cartel party perspective (Katz, 2001; Katz and Mair, 1995; Mair, 1994) and the Canadian experience (Carty, 2004), that inclusiveness is actually a recipe for party cohesion because it frees the representatives from the pressures of (the more orthodox) party activists, i.e., those who are likely to populate selected party agencies. Others see inclusiveness as a recipe for a decline in party cohesion and discipline (Crotty, 2006; Hazan and Rahat, 2006b; Kristjansson, 2002; Wu, 2001). For the sake of this paper, it would suffice to adopt the view that different selectorates make different pressures more or less relevant for the candidates. These are not necessarily expressed in decline in party cohesion.

⁷ On these phenomena see: Carty, 2002; Criddle, 1997; Erickson, 1997; Farrell, 1994; Kristjansson, 2004; Malloy, 2003; Rahat and Hazan, 2007. In addition, as Weldon (2006) demonstrates, quantity – measured as the number of party members – leads to lower member activism – measured as the percentage of active members.

⁸ Like the debate over the impact of inclusiveness on cohesion and discipline, there is also a debate over the impact of decentralization on cohesion and discipline. Some argue that the more decentralized system allows for lower cohesion and discipline (Faas, 2003; Hix, 2004; Sieberer, 2006) while others claim that decentralization does not lead to lower discipline (Carty, 2004; Epstein, 1980; Gallagher, 1988b; Obler, 1970; Ranney, 1965; 1968).

⁹ On women's quotas, see Dahlerup, 2006.

¹⁰ It is not impossible, however, to assure territorial representation through the use of quotas, or the representation of women through designing district(s) for women.

¹¹ There are further options that should be considered, like the use of preferential systems (rather than categorical ones) and possibly sophisticated systems of vote counting.

¹² This is, of course, a normative standpoint. There is a debate about whether parties should be highly regulated (like in the U.S.) or left on their own. While governments often regulate certain aspects, such as funding and -- since the 1990s -- the issue of quotas for women, it seems that in most countries, the dominant approach is (still?) that of seeing parties as voluntary associations. For a discussion of the more specific question of party internal democracy and its regulation/enforcement, see Mersel, 2006. Some would argue that in the age of the cartel party (Katz and Mair, 1995), when parties become semi-state agencies, they must be regulated, while others may prefer giving the party a chance “to bring society back in” (Yishai, 2001).